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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4134
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0008
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2018
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0690
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3743
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0116
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0028
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0105
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2171
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 002089

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SUBJECT: GOU'S ELECTION SURVEY SHOWS HUGE KARIMOV LEAD

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) Summary: A document outlining the results of an October 22-27, 2007 public poll--sponsored by Uzbekistan's Center for the Study of Public Opinion--found that 92.7 percent of those planning to vote will vote for President Karimov this December. None of his unwilling opponents received more than 2 percent of the public's support, according to the poll. The survey is probably best seen as partly a propaganda effort to add legitimacy to the elections and partly a Soviet-style "education" campaign. The document was distributed to members of the GOU and has not been given to the public to our knowledge, but Post acquired a copy of the document privately. End summary.

¶2. (C) According to a Russian-language GOU document entitled "Analytic Reference on the Results of a Public Opinion Poll: Presidential Elections of the Republic of Uzbekistan - 2007," signed by the Director of the Center for the Study of Public Opinion R.A. Ubaidullayeva, 92.7 percent of Uzbekistan's voters planned to vote for President Karimov in the upcoming presidential elections as of late October. The poll was conducted from October 22-27 among 1,550 residents of Uzbekistan's twelve provinces, the Republic of Karakalpakstan, and the city of Tashkent. A summary of the key findings appears below.

¶3. (C) The document outlines the main tasks of the poll as including: revealing the level of public awareness about the upcoming presidential elections and about the Law on Presidential Elections; determining how ready the population is to take part in the elections; revealing the priorities of the electorate; and studying the media preferences of citizens.

AWARENESS OF THE ELECTIONS AND ELECTION LAW

¶4. (C) The first question reads: Do you know that 2007 is the year of the presidential elections in Uzbekistan? Of those surveyed, 93.6 percent were aware of this. In Jizzakh,

Navoiy, and Khorezm provinces, 100 percent of those polled knew this, while Ferghana, Namangan, and Bukhara had the lowest levels of awareness at 91, 92.4, and 93 percent respectively.

¶15. (C) The second question reads: When (date and month) will the presidential elections take place? 84.4 percent of respondents knew the date of elections.

¶16. (C) The third question reads: Do you know who, according to our Constitution and the Law on Elections of the President of Uzbekistan, has the right to nominate presidential candidates? Of those surveyed, 82.7 percent knew the correct answer, with the provinces of Ferghana, Surkhandarya, and Jizzakh receiving the highest marks, (92.9, 92.4, and 89.2 percent, respectively) and Syrdarya, Bukhara, and Samarkand provinces receiving the lowest marks (65.8, 74.3, and 75.3 percent respectively).

WHO ARE THE CANDIDATES?

¶17. (C) The fourth question reads: Do you know the names of the presidential candidates nominated at the current time? Of the respondents, 92.4 percent said yes.

¶18. (C) The fifth question, "Name the presidential candidates nominated at the current time," was asked of those who answered yes to question number four. Every respondent named Islam Karimov. 39.3 percent of respondents identified Saidov. 35.1 percent of those polled recognized Tashmukhamedova. Rustamov, Dostmukhamedov, and Tursunov were named by 32.5, 26.8, and 18.5 percent of respondents respectively. (Note: Dostmukhamedov and Tursunov withdrew from the race in November because they did not secure enough signatures to be officially registered. End note.)

VOTING READINESS AND PREFERENCES

¶19. (C) The sixth question reads: Will you take part in the upcoming presidential election in December 2007? 90.9 percent of those polled said yes, 6.5 percent were undecided, and 1.6 percent of respondents were dead-set against participating in the elections. Andijon, Navoiy, and Namangan provinces had the highest level of intended participation (100, 97.4, and 95.7 percent), while Khorezm, Karakalpakstan, and Syrdarya (89.8, 90.2, 91.7 percent) had the lowest intended turnout.

¶110. (C) The seventh questions reads: If the presidential elections were conducted this coming Sunday, for which of the nominees from the political parties and initiative groups would you cast your vote? President Karimov received far and away the highest percentage of votes among those polled, at 92.7 percent. Rustamov, Saidov, and Tashmukhamedova followed, garnering 1.9, 1.5, and 1.3 percent respectively. Dostmukhamedov and Tursunov each received 0.6 and 0.4 percent of the intended votes, while 1.6 percent of respondents said it was "difficult to answer."

ELECTION MEDIA COVERAGE

¶111. (C) The eighth question reads: To what degree do you follow the pre-election presidential campaign? Of those surveyed, 19 percent said "constantly," 73 percent followed it "from time to time," and 8 percent did not follow it at all. Navoiy, Ferghana, and Karakalpakstan had the highest proportions of those who followed the campaign constantly, at 48.6, 36.6, and 25 percent. Of those polled, 22.6 percent of respondents in Syrdarya, 16.4 percent in Kashkadarya, and 15.7 percent in Bukhara did not follow it at all.

¶112. (C) The ninth question reads: From what source of mass media do you regularly receive information about the pre-election presidential campaign? (Comment: Respondents probably were allowed to cite multiple sources. End

comment.) The vast majority--93.4 percent of those surveyed--cited state television. 20.8 percent mentioned government press and 19.6 percent, state radio stations. Nongovernment television, nongovernment radiostations, and Russian mass media received 9.3, 4.8, and 3.9 percent respectively. 3.2 percent of respondents cited independent press, and foreign radio stations including "BBC" and "Svoboda" received 0.9 percent. Lastly, 0.3 percent of respondents cited foreign television such as Euronews and CNN.

CONCLUSIONS

¶13. (C) The last section, entitled "Conclusions and Recommendations," claims a high level of awareness among Uzbekistan's citizenry regarding the upcoming elections. Television was the most popular source of information, and the Center recommended holding televised debates of the presidential candidates to strengthen voter awareness of the elections. The Center also advised strengthening all types of information-educational work among the population to familiarize citizens with the Law on Elections, and voting rights, especially among young and elderly citizens. The poll claims that a high enough percentage of voters plan to take part in the elections, and voters looked favorably on the diversity of candidates as evidence of Uzbekistan's democratic development. Lastly, the results allow them to predict "on solid grounds," that Karimov will score a convincing victory in the elections. The high rating shows the population's trust in Karimov during the years of independence, the document states, and the absolute support of a majority of the people of Karimov's political and socioeconomic reforms.

COMMENT:

¶14. (C) The results of the poll come as no surprise. Over the past month and a half, we have heard from numerous sources that similar surveys were being carried out in neighborhoods throughout the country. The results are largely meaningless--levels of dissatisfaction with Karimov and his government are clearly higher than reflected, but in a system with no meaningful choice and no viable opposition, few respondents are likely to give more than the expected answers in a poll affording no anonymity. The poll is better seen as a propaganda tool to convince some in the government itself, and perhaps the rest of the populace and foreign audiences, of the elections' legitimacy. The surveys also can be seen as part of a Soviet-style "education" campaign, something still fairly common here. Finally, it is interesting that the percentage of those allegedly stating they would vote for Karimov, 92.7 percent, is a tad more than Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev got in Kazakhstan's last presidential election.

HANSON